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CHARLOTTE FBI CHIEF DIVISION COUNSEL PLEADS GUILTY TO MAKING A FALSE CERTIFICATION

____ WASHINGTON, D.C. – Erik B. Blowers, Supervisory Special Agent and Chief Division Counsel for the Charlotte Field Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, has pleaded guilty to knowingly making and submitting to the FBI a materially false statement, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and Department of Justice Inspector General Glenn A. Fine announced today.

Blowers pleaded guilty to a one-count criminal information at a hearing yesterday before District Judge N. Carlton Tilley, Jr. of the U.S. District Court, sitting by designation in the Western District of North Carolina.

Blowers faces a maximum sentence of one year in prison and a \$100,000 fine. Sentencing has not yet been scheduled. Blowers agreed to resign from the FBI immediately and to not seek or accept employment with any department or agency of the U.S. government in the future.

In his plea of guilty, Blowers admitted that he accepted benefits worth no less than \$6,000 from David Simonini, a former cooperating witness for the FBI under Blowers's supervision. Blowers also admitted that the FBI squad that he was then charged with supervising was conducting a preliminary investigation into allegations of financial institution fraud and wire fraud against Simonini. Blowers further admitted that, in April and August 2000, he traveled to Las Vegas with Simonini, at Simonini's invitation. Simonini was responsible for the expenses associated with Blowers's trips to Las Vegas, and Blowers did not pay Simonini for the costs of the trips. Blowers admitted that he was required by the Ethics in Government Act and FBI regulations to report his receipt of those benefits on an Executive Branch Confidential Financial Disclosure Report.

Blowers also admitted that, on or about Oct. 31, 2000, he filed his Confidential Financial Disclosure Report, as required by the Ethics in Government Act. In response to the requirement that he report gifts and travel reimbursements received from one source totaling more than \$260, and knowing that he had received gifts and travel reimbursements in April and August 2000 from David Simonini that he was required to report, he falsely checked the box marked "None."

This case was prosecuted by Senior Counsel William J. Corcoran and Trial Attorney Daniel A. Petalas of the Public Integrity Section, headed by Section Chief Noel L. Hillman. The case was investigated by Special Agent Eric A. Johnson of the Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General.

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